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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, May 12, 1937.

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Subject: "NEWS FOR FOOD-SHOPPERS." Information from the Consumers' Counsel of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, the Consumers' Market Service has just arrived from the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in Washington, D. C., and, as usual, it is full of facts for food-shoppers -- facts on supplies and prices of seasonal foods.

Mention of seasonal foods naturally brings strawberries to mind. So let me quote the cheerful first sentence of the Market Service: "May appears to be a good month for consumers who like strawberries." The Service goes on to say that you can expect the largest supplies of strawberries on the market during the latter part of the month when a number of Southern producing areas will be shipping at the same time. Louisiana strawberries began "to move in volume," as the trade expresses it, during the last of April, and this caused a marked drop in prices. The Louisiana crop is later than usual so is likely to overlap with supplies from other States this month. As supplies increase, prices will probably continue to go down. The States that usually ship strawberries in May are producing this year about 15 percent more berries than last year, so the economists estimate. The community strawberry festival in all except the northernmost states will be taking place during the last half of May.

What about supplies and prices of early onions? Listeners, new onions which also go by the name of "Bermude onions" are now moving from Texas in volume. Usually Texas growers ship their largest supplies of early onions in May, but because of unfavorable weather this spring, the crop is about a week later than a year ago. The onion crop this year is not so large as last year's record crop but it is the third largest since 1918. So you can plan to let yourself go if you are fond of onion soup and fried onions. Onion prices will probably go down seasonally as supplies increase, but most likely prices this year will not be quite so low as last year.

As for lettuce, you will find plenty of lettuce on the market this month. That is what the economists predict. During the spring and summer, lettuce supplies usually increase each month until they reach a peak in July. But this year Arizona lettuce has been coming in in smaller and smaller amounts since late April. Lettuce from Salinas, California, is now arriving on the market, and the largest shipments of it will probably be coming in during the last half of this month. You may have noticed the advertising campaign which Western growers have been carrying on to promote more use of lettuce. Well, naturally, these growers are making an effort to have the markets well supplied with lettuce to follow up this advertising. Lettuce production this year is about 28 percent above average, according to the estimates.

As for the news of the important southern truck crops, the prospects are for larger supplies and the usual seasonal price decline. Tomatoes are the chief exception. Supplies of Florida tomatoes are smaller this spring because of damaging rains.

Fruits? Well, you can expect higher prices on all fruits except strawberries. The melon season usually begins in May and supplies are relatively light until June. Then the so-called "peak movement" of watermelons and cantaloups usually comes in July and August. Because of unfavorable weather this year, the melon crop will probably ripen later than usual.

Time was when people in most parts of this country never dreamed of eating corn on the cob in spring. But the newer methods of shipping fresh foods have made big changes in our menus and eating habits. This year the first shipments of green corn arrived at markets during the latter part of April. Larger supplies of green corn will probably come in this month, mostly from Texas. But the peak in supplies and the low point in the price of green corn still comes in July and August when local gardens are supplying the local markets all over the country.

Perhaps you would like to know about potato prices in the near future. The predictions are that potatoes will become cheaper and cheaper until about the middle of August. But prices may rise for a short time this month if the supplies of old potatoes go down much faster than the new potatoes come in from Louisiana and Alabama. The potato crop in these 2 States is maturing later than usual, according to reports, but volume shipments will probably come in late this month. And probably the supply of May and June potatoes will be larger this year than last.

So much for fruits and vegetables. Now about meat supplies and prices. Prices of beef and lamb will probably stay where they are or even go up this month. The economists do not predict any change in pork prices either. As for poultry prices, they will probably go up after May as they usually do.

Butter and eggs? The butter market has been unsettled but you can expect that the price of butter will go down as more comes on the market. Egg prices went down slightly during April but will probably go up during May.

That concludes the news from the Consumers' market Service for this week.

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